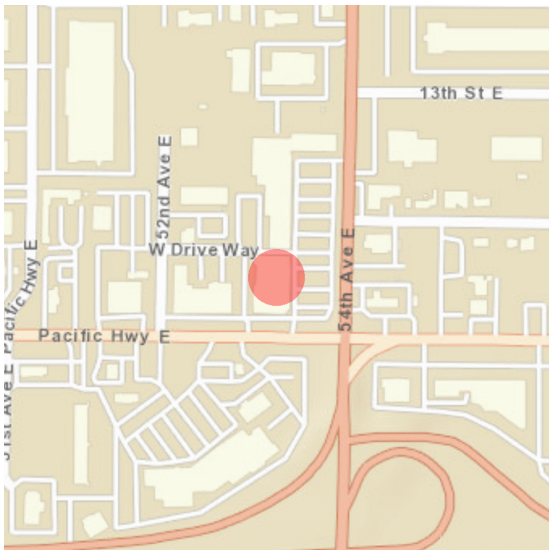
Historic Property Report

Historic Name: Poodle Dog Restaurant

Property ID: 727593

Location



Address: 1522 54th Ave E, Fife, Washington, 98424

Tax No/Parcel No: 0320018017

Geographic Areas: Pierce County, Pierce County Certified Local Government, PUYALLUP Quadrangle, T20R03E01, Congressional District 6, 27, high

Information

Number of stories:

Construction Dates:

Construction Type	Year	Circa
Built Date	1966	☐
Remodel	1976	☐

Historic Use:

Category	Subcategory
Commerce/Trade	Commerce/Trade - Restaurant
Commerce/Trade	Commerce/Trade - Restaurant

Historic Context:

Category
Commerce

Architect/Engineer:

Category	Name or Company
Builder	Merit Co.

Thematics:

Local Registers and Districts

Name	Date Listed	Notes

Project History

Project Number, Organization, Project Name	Resource Inventory	SHPO Determination	SHPO Determined By, Determined Date
2018-02-01251, , Tacoma Dome Link Extension		Determined Not Eligible	Maureen Elenga, 6/10/2024

Photos

1522 54th Avenue E, view northwest.

1522 54th Avenue E office building portion, view southwest.

1522 54th Avenue E, view west-southwest.

The Poodle Dog in Fife, 1970, courtesy of the Richards Studio Collection, Tacoma Public Library, as published in the News Tribune, 2021.jpg

The Poodle Dog in Fife, 1949, courtesy of the Tacoma Public Library.jpg

1522 54th Avenue E office building portion, view southeast.

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Inventory Details - 2/10/2022

Common name:

Date recorded: 2/10/2022

Field Recorder: Lauren Waldroop

Field Site number:

SHPO Determination

Detail Information

Characteristics:

Category	Item
Foundation	Concrete - Poured
Form Type	Commercial
Roof Type	Flat with Parapet
Roof Material	Asphalt/Composition - Rolled
Cladding	Wood - Clapboard
Cladding	Stone
Cladding	Stucco
Cladding	Metal - Corrugated
Structural System	Masonry - Concrete Block (CMU)
Plan	L-Shape

Styles:

Period	Style Details
Modern Movement (1930-1970)	Modern

Surveyor Opinion

Significance narrative: Integrity

Constructed in 1966, the building at 1522 54th Avenue E is the third building at this location to house the Poodle Dog Restaurant, which was started by Rocco Manza and Emilio Zarelli as a hamburger stand in 1933. They remodeled the restaurant three times and rebuilt it twice before 1980 (News Tribune 1980). The date of the last remodel is unknown, but the building has been heavily altered since the 1970s, when the restaurant included battered corners, a geometric emphasis evident in its flat roof, flat eaves, vertical divisions, minimal windows, and dominant stone cladding, as well as a former example of its standalone sign. Additionally, based on a review of historic aerial photographs, the building originally abutted the north-adjacent commercial strip, but a portion of the commercial strip was demolished in 2016, creating a small driveway between the two buildings (Google Earth Pro 2022). Additional alterations are associated with successive renovations and rebuilds.

From its period of construction (1966), 1522 54th Avenue E retains integrity of location, setting, and association, but renovations and alterations have diminished the building's

integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling.

Evaluation

The commercial building at 1522 54th Avenue E was constructed ca. 1966 for use as the Poodle Dog Restaurant and additional office space. When the Poodle Dog Restaurant was started as a hamburger stand in 1933, it included a bar with ten seats and two booths (News Tribune 1980). The original hamburger stand (40 feet long by 14 feet wide) was replaced in 1938 with the Poodle Dog Cafe (100 feet long by 50 feet wide), as well as the modern Century Ballroom directly north of the cafe (News Tribune 1938). The cafe was remodeled in 1949 in a Modern style with a large neon sign on top of the building and included private dining service and innovative new kitchen appliances, including automated machines to wash, polish, and sterilize the glasses, dishes, and silverware (News Tribune 1949). In 1964, the Century Ballroom burned down, and Rocco Manza and Emilio Zarelli built shops in its place. In 1966, they replaced the Poodle Dog Restaurant with a large building to accommodate family style dining, as well as office space, and then renovated the interior to make way for boardrooms and banquet rooms (Bluhm 2016; News Tribune 1985). The Poodle Dog Restaurant did not operate during World War II but has otherwise been a local gathering spot in Fife since 1933, appearing in the Tacoma News Tribune as the meeting place for clubs, local government, and large public gatherings for many years (News Tribune 1980). The commercial building is significant for its associations under commerce and as the home of an iconic local business (Criterion A).

Additionally, the building is associated with business partners Rocco Manza and Emilio Zarelli, who went into business together in 1933 and partnered with Bud Merritt in 1957 to form the Merit Co., a construction firm that continues to operate today. As part of the Merit Co., Manza and Zarelli constructed several buildings in Tacoma and elsewhere, including the Tacoma Doric Motor Hotel, the IBM building, the Sherwood Inn, the Social Security Building, and the Villa Plaza Mall (News Tribune 1980). The Merit Co. was also the general contractor for the Tacoma Dome in the early 1980s (News Tribune 1981). While the Merit Co. was originally located in Tacoma and is currently located in Lakewood, Zarelli and Manza worked from their personal offices in the Poodle Dog until they passed away in 1985 and 1999, respectively (Seattle Times 1999) (Criterion B).

The building is a modest example of the Modern commercial style and includes characteristics such as the pent roof overhang, projecting blade sign (although currently without signage), siding, windows, and freestanding neon sign that appear to date from the 1990s or later. Previous iterations of the building more clearly expressed the Modern style with canted window walls, dominant cut stone siding, and integrated neon signage. While the existing building embodies some of the distinctive characteristics of its type, period, and method of construction (those of a Modern commercial restaurant), it does not possess the aesthetic quality or character-defining features of previous Poodle Dog restaurant buildings with distinctive architectural features. The extant building does not represent the work of a master; or possess high artistic values; or represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction (i.e., is part of a district) (Criterion C). Finally, the building was built of common construction methods and well-known materials and is unlikely to answer important research questions or yield information about human history that can only be answered by the actual physical material, design, construction methods, or interrelation of these resources (Criterion D).

The building at 1522 54th Avenue E is significant for its associations under Criterion A:

Commerce and Criterion B for its association with business partners Rocco Manza and Emilio Zarelli and their business operations. However, based on significant alterations that have obscured the building's historic-period character, it no longer expresses its significance. Due to an irretrievable loss of integrity, Historical Research Associates, Inc., recommends the Poodle Dog at 1522 54th Avenue E is not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or Washington Heritage Register under any criteria.

Physical description:

According to the Pierce County Assessor, the commercial building known as the Poodle Dog Restaurant at 1522 54th Avenue E was constructed in 1966 and includes a restaurant and separate office space (Pierce County Assessor 2022). In 1976, according to South Sound Magazine, the restaurant was renovated to include a bar, boardroom, and banquet rooms (Bluhm 2016). The one-story, L-shaped commercial building faces east toward 54th Avenue E. It sits on a poured-concrete foundation. It is clad in clapboard and cut stone on the east facade and south elevation; scored stucco on the north elevation; and corrugated metal and concrete block on the west elevation. It is topped by a flat roof likely clad in rolled asphalt with a pent roof overhang on the east facade clad in standing-seam metal.

The building's main facade (east elevation) includes two commercial double-door entrances with glass-block transoms and sidelights under two small pediments with signage indicating the "Poodle Room" and the "Pup Room." The restaurant roof includes a blade projection at the southeast corner. An additional storefront at the northeast corner, with a single door flanked by full length aluminum windows under a metal awning, is used by Farmers Insurance.

The building's north elevation features three metal awnings above one secondary and two commercial entrances (one presently used by a tattoo parlor) with full-height fixed windows. The south elevation features a pent roof overhang on the east half over fixed, aluminum windows and no overhang above the west half, which is clad in cut stone. The west elevation features two metal doors. Directly southeast of the building is a large, freestanding neon sign for the Poodle Dog Restaurant. It appears to postdate the restaurant but was designed to match elements found on an earlier Poodle Dog building. It advertises the "Poodle Dog, Good Food, Pup Room." A review of photographs from the 1970s suggests the building was likely renovated near the turn of the twenty-first century.

Bibliography:

Bluhm, Tiffany
2016 Fife's Poodle Dog. South Sound Magazine, July 1. Electronic document, https://www.southsoundmag.com/eat-drink/fife-s-poodle-dog/article_b6f46042-ad5b-572a-bb52-d07d3937184f.html, accessed March 7, 2022.

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1938 The Poodle Dog, Popular Fife Highway Restaurant, Completely Modernized. June 29:7.
1949 Modernistic New Highway Cafe Opens. November 9:8.
1980 Zarelli and Manza. March 23:D-8.
1981 Zarelli prod to be doing dome. April 27:A-3.
1985 Creative mind key to Zarelli success. August 25:C-5.

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